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New Leadership within Department of Health and Human Services

Director of Health and Human Services, Mike Willden, today announced changes in leadership positions within the Department.

Romaine Gilliland, Administrator of the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services (DWSS) has announced his retirement in early 2012. To replace Gilliland, Diane Comeaux is being appointed to the DWSS Administrator position. Comeaux currently serves as the Administrator of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS). Amber Howell, currently Deputy Administrator at DCFS, is being appointed Acting Administrator of DCFS.

Willden thanked Gilliland for his work as the Administrator at DWSS. Economic conditions in Nevada have resulted in large increases in the public assistance rolls over the past three years. "Romaine has done an excellent job keeping atop this challenge; leading efforts to simplify eligibility processes; establishing web-based application systems; and, finding more ways to improve productivity," Willden

said. “We will miss his business approach to the difficult problems we face every day.” Gilliland will continue to work for the next few months while duties are transitioned to Comeaux.

Comeaux has led DCFS for the past three years. Her duties included overseeing the state’s child protection and child welfare system, juvenile justice programs, and children’s mental health programs. Prior to her DCFS assignment, Comeaux worked in the state Health Care and Financing Division and the State Budget Office for many years. “Welfare is facing many information technology and fiscal challenges over the next year,” said Willden, “Diane has the skill set to help lead us through these challenges.”

As DCFS Deputy Administrator over child welfare programs, Howell has worked closely with Clark and Washoe Counties and has had responsibility for the service delivery of child welfare within the 15 rural counties. She is a graduate of UNR with a degree in Psychology and attended Graduate school in Boston, Massachusetts. Howell has worked as a substance abuse counselor and a Drug Court Coordinator. She has been a case manager and a case management supervisor, has worked in various mental health programs, and for the past 5 years has been employed by DCFS in various capacities in the child welfare area. “Amber is always ready and willing to step up and take new assignments,” said Willden. “She will help us transition once again as the leadership team takes on new roles.”

The retirement of many key administrators and managers will be a big challenge for the Department of Health and Human Services over the next year. “Employees of the Department will do as they always do and step up and help meet this challenge,” Willden said, adding that mentoring new managers will be a top priority for the Department.

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